

The following appeared in the [Huffington Post](#) on April 21, 2010, Quigley's One-Year Anniversary in Congress:

One year ago today, [I was sworn in](#) to represent Illinois' 5th District in the United States Congress. As I said that night on the House floor, "the people of my district gave me their trust--I can't tell you how much that means to me."

In his State of the Union address, President Obama spoke of a "deficit of trust." [A recent Pew poll](#) quantified his concern, showing that only 22 percent of Americans trust their government to do the right thing. Put another way, eight out of ten Americans expect us to make the wrong decision.

[On my one-year anniversary](#) , I believe our greatest challenge and mandate in Washington--and Illinois--is regaining the public's trust.

The key to rebuilding that trust is in understanding that, as public servants, our mission matters. It means not just paying lip service, but taking financial responsibility, transparency, and ethics as seriously as the voters want us to. If we can make the tough decisions and prove these as priorities to the public, trust will follow.

### Financial Responsibility

Financial responsibility begins with valuing each tax dollar like the families who pay them do. Fifteen years from now, the cost of our public debt is projected to be double the value of all the combined goods and services produced in the United States. Don't be fooled by the abstract sound of this principle: left unchecked, debt can force cutbacks in government services, bankrupt social security and Medicare, and result in higher taxes.

It's one thing to rhetorically pledge to rein in spending, but I have led by example. I introduced a ["Sense of the House"](#) resolution that sets targets for future debt reduction. I [voted against a Defense Appropriations bill](#) loaded with billions of dollars in wasteful projects, including military equipment that military didn't even request and hundreds of corporate earmarks ripe for abuse. I cosponsored a bill to stop pay raises for members of Congress and [returned \\$100,000 from my office budget](#) to the Treasury.

Most importantly, I was proud to join my colleagues in the House to pass legislation which restores the [pay-as-you-go rules](#) that forced the government to live within its means in the 1990s, leading to a record budget surplus.

### Transparency

Opening up the Capitol dome and giving the public a look at the inner workings of Congress--however messy they may be--certainly won't be pretty. But trust isn't earned by showing off only your Sunday best. The dirty laundry has to be aired, too.

In March, I co-founded the bipartisan [Transparency Caucus](#) , an initiative focused on strengthening existing transparency laws and working toward new disclosure efforts that utilize technology to make government's business accessible to the public.

Two days after the launch of the Caucus, I introduced the multi-faceted [Transparency in Government Act](#) , landmark legislation that redefines what it means to be a lobbyist, demands more oversight of federal spending, and provides unprecedented public access to the financial records of Members of Congress.

### Ethics

Whether I'm reading a national publication or one of my local Chicago newspapers, I don't need to turn too many pages before I stumble upon another scandal. Not only do ethics violations deteriorate the public trust, but they also disrupt and undermine legitimate debate and policy. I spent 10 years fighting for reform in Cook County, and I didn't change my DNA when I got to Washington. My outspoken positions haven't always been popular in the halls of Congress, but they have been rooted in what I believed was right and necessary.

I [introduced legislation](#) that would end the federal government's infringement on states like Illinois' anti-pay-to-play laws. States across the country have passed meaningful reform measures to ensure that publicly-funded projects are chosen on merit, not influential political contributions. To work against that on the federal level is not just wrong, but strikes at the heart of a government beholden to a select few, leaving the rest of us to wonder who's on our side.

I crossed party lines to demand [investigations into sweetheart mortgages](#) given to policymakers by Countrywide and other lenders. I was [one of the first Democrats](#) to ask Rep. Rangel to step aside from his chairmanship when it appeared he was cheating the very tax code his powerful committee helps write. And one of the first bills I introduced was to [prohibit corporate earmarks](#), and almost a year later, the House did just that.

## **Moving Forward**

Albert Einstein famously described insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." If we continue down our current path, we'd be insane to act surprised when, in the end, we've lost the remaining 22 percent of the people's trust. Because believe me, it is near impossible to govern without it.

Since my very first day in Congress--and for 10 years on the Cook County Board--I have legislated dedicated to the principle that we in government can earn and keep that trust only by valuing tax dollars, showing voters exactly how we're spending them, and making sure we do it honestly.

Today, after a year in Washington, I haven't yet accomplished all of these goals. But I treasure your trust and won't stop fighting for what is right, no matter how many anniversaries it takes.